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## THE CARDYKE.

I cannot better introduce this subject than by quoting from Professor Babington's "*Ancient Cambridgeshire*." He says, p. 105, 2nd ed., "indeed it may be doubted if any antiquary, except Stukeley, has felt convinced that it (the Cardyke) really did extend into Cambridgeshire" and perhaps he might have added "or Huntingdonshire." While I cannot pretend to treat the subject from the standpoint of an antiquary I am glad of an opportunity of calling attention to a few facts and some suggestions connected with the question.

Professor Babington says—"any persons who have carefully examined the country will I am convinced agree with me in believing that Dugdale was here depending upon incorrect information. Stukeley remarks that the country people had a notion that the Ouse originally ran by this course into the Cam, but adds that it has not the least appearance of a natural river, and I quite agree with him." No doubt Dugdale's information is correct, *viz.*, that the Cam originally ran "from Beche to Chare fen in Cottenham and so into Ouse"; and it is difficult for anyone acquainted with the country to hold the notion that the Ouse ever ran into the Cam by this route, at any rate in Stukeley's time, seeing that the watercourse in question, for nearly the whole distance from the Cam to the Old West river did, and still does, convey its waters in the direction here indicated.

Perhaps this is the best place to clear up the difficulty Babington felt as to the local names in Cottenham fen; of course he is referring to the "Old Survey" when he

speaks of the Ordnance Map, and this for many reasons is the most convenient to use in considering this subject. Starting from the south boundary of the sheet in question ( $\frac{1}{4}$  sheet having "DGES" in "Cambridgeshire," the county name) the "supposed south part of the Cardyke" runs along the right hand side of the road leading from Cambridge to Ely (about one mile west of the letter S) to a place marked "Goose Farm," where the road turns to the north-east. The Cardyke continues in a more or less direct line through Cottenham Common to Lockspit Hall on the Old West river. The Chare fen of Stukeley and Dugdale is marked on the map "Chaff fen," which latter name, though sometimes locally used, is wrong, both as to spelling and to its position on the map. Chere, Chare, or Chaff fen is the N.E. part of the parish of Cottenham, and is bounded on the N. by the Old West River; on the E. by the Ely road; S. by "Hundred acres" (Undertakers' or Adventurers' land); and extends W. as far as Twentypence ferry, on the same river. To any one acquainted with old maps and descriptions it need scarcely be said that although very interesting and useful, they are not to be relied upon to the same extent as the modern Ordnance maps. To take a case in point, can Hayward's *Survey* of 1636 and the map of the fens belonging to it be made to fit into the parishes to which the descriptions refer? More than that, does not the New Survey Ordnance Map, with all the skill and care bestowed in its preparation need the revision that is now taking place?

The object of this paper will have been attained if antiquaries are induced to look into the question, and as a small contribution I would venture to suggest, may it not have been possible, or probable, that at some time in the distant past, perhaps before the depression of the surface over the large area now known as the Bedford level took place, that the waters of south Cambridgeshire found their way to the sea from Cambridge *via* Cottenham, Aldreth High bridge, Earith and Benwick, &c., &c.? The following is an attempt by one, who (to vary Babington's term) "is intimately acquainted

with the (drainage) of the country in question" to consider (1) some local facts and (2) to offer some general suggestions.

(I). *Local.* Lodes, that is, channels for the conveyance of the local upland waters through the adjacent fens to the rivers, it may be assumed, were included among the works undertaken by the Bedford Level Corporation, though in some cases probably already existing watercourses were used and improved. Details on this point are scanty in the usual sources of information, for instance, Dugdale, Cole, Wells, Watson, and others, as distinct from historians and archæologists generally.

Cottenham Lode receives the waters from the highland parishes of Rampton, Westwick, Oakington, Girton, Madingley and Dry Drayton; the greater part from Stanton St. Michæl, Histon, and Impington; with a small quantity from Hardwick and Caldecote. That is to say the "hinterland" from the old west river to the Watershed south of the road leading from Cambridge to St. Neots. These waters are all collected in the Oakington brook, and, when they took their natural course, formed the boundary between Cottenham (on the E), and Rampton and Willingham (on the W), and joined the old west river near Aldreth High Bridge. This course was diverted early in the last Century, at a point near what is known as "Giants Hill" in Rampton, and was turned into its present course, east, past Cottenham Church and into the "New Cut" and Cottenham Lode, along which its waters join the Old West river near Twenty-pence ferry. Cottenham Lode, as part of the South level drainage system, ends at a bridge over it, between "n" and "e" in the word 'new' on the map. The origin of the term "New Cut" is obvious. This course for the waters of Oakington brook, by the new cut and Cottenham lode, runs through highland, land that drains by gravitation viz:—the part marked on the map as Smithey fen, with which is connected a track through part of Cottenham Common to the village.

Similarly, it appears to the ordinary observer that the highland waters of the Willingham "New Cut" at one time took a more westward course (at the word "Cut"), formed the boundary between Willingham and Over, and joined the Ouse in Crane fen. The same term "New Cut" lends authority to this.

Before the formation of the Cottenham Lode the natural outlet for the small part of the highland waters of the parish that drain this way, for about nine-tenths of these fall into Beach-ditch, which forms the boundary between Landbeach and Cottenham, was by a drain opposite the Church, running in N.W. direction to Mow fen in Rampton.

(II). *General.* It seems to me on reading the old authorities on the state of the country in the north part of Cambridgeshire, the "surrounded lands" as they are usually called, that it is all relating to the district between the highlands of the Isle of Ely and those of the country about Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. It appears that the Ouse, Nen, and sometimes the Welland, poured their waters into the large district containing Whittlesea, Ramsey, and Ugg Meres, and which extended eastward to below Littleport, from whence it made its way to the sea, as best it could, either by Lynn or Wisbech, or even Spalding: although which is the more "ancient" outlet is not so clear. The district south of the highlands of the Isle of Ely to the highlands of Bottisham, Waterbeach, Cottenham, Willingham, and Over do not seem to be so much in question. The waters of the Ouse are in the earlier accounts described as falling by the West Water to Benwick and so joining the Nen and taking the same course to the sea. If it is only in comparatively later times that references to the Old West river and the Cam joining their waters at Harrimere are made, is it too much to infer that this part of the great level was the last to be depressed? Further, if the "Akeman Street" was a Roman Road what had become of it at the time of the Norman Conquest, that it did not afford a passage to Ely? The distance from

the highlands on each side of the fen in the lines of the two routes, Akeman Street and Aldreth Causeway, is altogether in favour of the former, this being less than half of the latter.

The sea overflowed the fens many ages before the Roman occupation, in times which are outside the field of this enquiry; but, is it possible that the depression of this outer edge of the level, which is farthest from the sea, may have occurred after the construction of the "Roman Way" which, again, may have been one of the first of those formed in Britain, being near the south-east of England, the seat of their earliest occupation.

In the "*Fenland Past and Present*" a law is referred to which treats of the angles at which tributaries enter rivers. This paper does not profess to deal with the scientific part of the subject, nor does the writer claim to have any opinion on the question dealt with in Chap. VII. of that work, but certainly the angle at which Oakington brook formerly entered the Old West river is a very unusual one, if the river always ran in the same direction as at present. The same remarks apply in the case of the Willingham "Cut." This latter drains the village and part of the land beyond, to the shaded contour south of it on the map, only.

It may further be noticed that the irregular triangles formed by the diversion of these three streams, the Willingham Cut, the Oakington brook or Cottenham Cut, and the river Cam bear a remarkable proportion to the area drained by the respective streams.

The suggestions made in this paper briefly are:—

(1). The Cam took the course described by Dugdale\* "The river of Grant by a fair channel passing from Beche to Chare fen in Cottenham and so to Ouse, was diverted, and by a straighter course turned down by another branch of the same to Harrimere, where it loseth the name."

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\* *History of Embanking*, chap. liv.

(2). The Cam, Oakington brook, and Willingham "New Cut" formerly *all* took a more westwardly direction, and their united waters were then passed by the West Water to Benwick.

(3). When the West Water had decayed to such an extent that one authority states that the waters ran *to* Earith, instead of from Earith to Benwick, the whole upland waters of the Ouse were forced *up* the Cam on to the lowlands of Haddenham, Cottenham and Stretham, and the depression of this part of the level being more recent they soon cut a regular course to Harrimere, where they met the newly diverted Cam.

(4). The area included in the angle of diversion (if that is an allowable term to use) corresponds to the area drained by the respective streams.

The Cardyke, with the earthworks at Cottenham, to which our attention is elsewhere directed, would together with the earthworks in the neighbourhood of Denny Abbey be well worth a visit. Perhaps at no very distant time the Society may find an opportunity for investigating a subject that leaves much room for speculation and is full of interest.

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